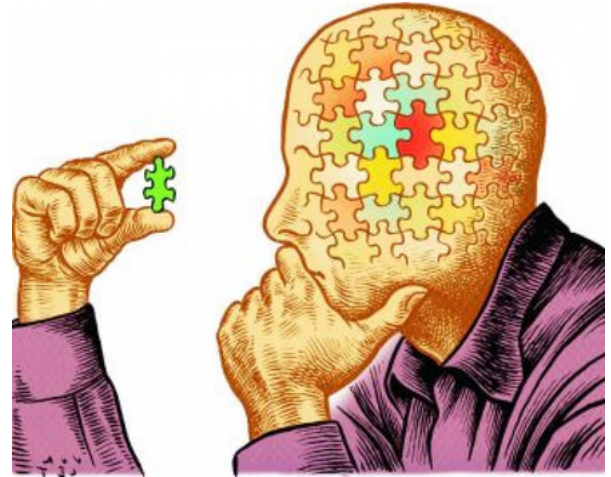


METACOGNITION THINKING ABOUT YOUR THINKING



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1

Warm up

Read the text and examine the diagram.



Successful professionals in fast-paced environments constantly face complex decisions, high-stakes negotiations and unexpected challenges. What separates top performers from the rest is often not raw intelligence, but their ability to monitor and adjust their own thinking processes in real time. This skill is called **metacognition** – literally “thinking about your thinking”. It involves planning how you will approach a task, monitoring your progress and biases while doing it, and evaluating the results afterwards so you can improve next time.



Answer the questions below.

1. What is the difference between cognition and metacognition?
2. How might metacognition help a leader during a difficult team meeting or a high-pressure project deadline?
3. What do you think could happen in a professional story called “Metacognition in the Boardroom” if the main character fails (or succeeds) to use metacognition?

2

vocabulary

You are going to watch a short professional video about metacognition. Before you watch, complete the activities to define some important vocabulary.

Group 1: Complete the sentences with words from the list below. Use the context to explain the meanings of these items.

Biases

Heuristics

Introspection

Self
Regulation

Debrief

Pitfalls

- 1 Unconscious _____ often influence our hiring decisions without us realizing it.
- 2 A quick mental _____ can save time in complex problem-solving when deadlines are tight.
- 3 Daily _____ helps busy professionals learn from both successes and failures in their thinking.
- 4 After the high-stakes negotiation, the team held a thorough _____ to discuss what went well and what could be improved.
- 5 Effective _____ is crucial for staying focused and calm during long strategy sessions or crises.
- 6 One of the most common cognitive _____ in project management is failing to question initial assumptions.

All of these items are countable nouns, but only one is always used in its plural form

- which is it?



Group 2: Choose the best option to complete each sentence. Explain your choices.

1. A high-performing leader knows how to their own thinking process in real time.
a. monitor b. micromanage
2. During a difficult board meeting, one executive began to the new strategy, making the whole team defensive.
a. critique b. criticize
3. Professionals are no longer advised to every small decision; instead they should trust their trained intuition.
a. overthink b. analyze
4. The new training program is about a manager who is always trying to his team's mindset but with little success.
a. shift b. force
5. The staff in executive coaching will check to make sure that no one is their cognitive biases when making strategic choices.
a. ignoring b. concealing
6. Try not to helpful feedback without first considering it carefully.
a. dismiss b. reject

3 Watching for details

Watch What is Metacognition | Explained in 2 min (00:00-02:00) and answer the questions in group 1.

Click here for the lesson video : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=urNcjYyalvY>

1. What is metacognition described as in the video?
2. What does the video say metacognition is often referred to as?
3. What are the three main phases of metacognition mentioned?
4. According to the video, what does the planning phase involve?
5. What surprising benefit does the video highlight for using metacognition in daily work?



Watch **What is Metacognition | Explained in 2 min (00:00-02:00)** and answer the questions in group 2.

1. How does metacognition help professionals understand the goals of a task or project?
2. Did the video suggest that metacognition is only useful for learning new skills, or does it apply more broadly?
3. What happens during the monitoring and evaluation phases according to the explanation?
4. What plan or cycle is metacognition presented as part of?
5. How did the video make you feel about applying metacognition in your own professional life?

4 Language in context

Part A: Complete the sentences from the video.

achieve greater success	thinking about thinking	monitor their thinking
assessing whether the desired outcome	awareness of one's own learning	figuring out the best strategies

- 1 Metacognition is an _____ and is often referred to as _____ .
- 2 It means understanding the goals of the learning process, _____ for learning, and then _____ is being met.
- 3 In management and productivity, metacognition helps professionals _____ in real time.
- 4 By practising metacognition, successful leaders can make better decisions, avoid costly pitfalls and _____ in their work.



Part B: Use the context to explain the meaning of the items in your words.

1. thinking about thinking -
2. awareness of one's own learning -
3. figuring out the best strategies -
4. assessing whether the desired outcome -

Part C: These expressions are most likely to be used in formal, professional contexts. Complete the sentences in a logical way.

1. Employees who asked for more time did better quality work with fewer issues around stress.
2. The executive coach looked at the performance data and said that we should expect ... awareness of one's own learning.
3. The project manager agreed to help the team by figuring out the best strategies if ...
4. If you want to succeed in high-stakes negotiations, you must start ... assessing whether the desired outcome ...





8

Language point: mixed conditionals

Read about this language point and complete the exercises.

Mixed Conditionals for Professional Reflection

Mixed conditionals link a **past hypothetical** with a **present or future consequence**. They are especially useful for executives and leaders when **analysing past decisions, reflecting on current realities, or planning better future outcomes**. The most common pattern is a **third-conditional if-clause (past perfect)** combined with a **second-conditional main clause (would + base verb)** to show how a past action (or inaction) affects the present.

Compare these two items

- **A) I didn't monitor my assumptions during the negotiation. That is why the deal fell through. If I had monitored my thinking, I would be in a stronger position now.**
- **B) If I had monitored my thinking during the negotiation, the deal wouldn't have fallen through and I would be in a stronger position now.**

Mixed conditionals let you express **regret, cause and effect, alternative outcomes, and forward-looking advice** in a single sentence. When the **if-clause comes first**, separate it from the main clause with a comma. The most useful combination for professional reflection is **3rd + 2nd** (past perfect → would + base verb), but other combinations are possible when the time frames you want to link differ.

Pattern	Form	Time Link	Professional Use
3rd + 2nd	If + past perfect; would + base verb	Past → present result	Reflecting on past decisions affecting current status
2nd + 3rd	If + past simple; would have + past participle	Present → different past results	Speculating how a current constraint could have changed past outcomes
3rd + 3rd	If + past perfect; would have + past participle	Past → different past results	Counterfactual postmortems of past projects
2nd + 2nd	If + past simple; would + base verb	Present/future hypothetical	Strategic planning and unlikely scenarios

Regret / Analysis (3rd + 2nd)

"If I had validated the market data, we **would be meeting** our targets now."

Speculation about Past (2nd + 3rd)

"If our team were more experienced, we **would have closed** the deal last quarter."

Past Counterfactual (3rd + 3rd)

"If the supplier had delivered on time, the launch **would have gone ahead** as planned."

Strategic Hypothetical (2nd + 2nd)

"If we had a dedicated risk officer, we **would handle** crises more proactively."

💡 **Modal nuance:** Swap *would* for *could* or *might* to soften claims – "If I had checked the forecast, we **might be** in a better position now."



Part A: Stop and check.

What time relationships and professional meanings are expressed by the conditional clauses in sentence B above?

Part B: Underline the conditional clause in each of these sentences from the video / professional context and say what type of conditional is being used and what relationship is being expressed.

1. If leaders had practised metacognition regularly, they would approach high-pressure decisions with greater clarity today.
2. If you monitor your thinking in real time, you would have avoided many of the cognitive pitfalls we saw last quarter.
3. If the team had evaluated their strategy earlier, they wouldn't be facing these unexpected delays now.
4. If I weren't so busy with daily operations, I would have spent more time on strategic self-reflection last year.
5. If professionals understood their own biases better, they would make far fewer impulsive choices in board meetings.
6. Struggling with a complex project, the manager realised that if he had used metacognition from the start, the outcome would have been completely different.





Part A (continued – creative task):

Add three to five mixed conditional sentences to the text above to make it more interesting and reflective. Your additions should include a range of the functions listed in the Language point (3rd + 2nd, 2nd + 3rd, etc.). You are free to change any of the original sentences if you need to or insert additional sentences.



**8****Reading and grammar practice**

Part A: Read another professional story about metacognition in action, using the glossary to help you understand.

The Executive and the Failing Product Launch

Elena was the head of product development at a fast-growing tech company. Six months before the major product launch, the team hit serious delays. Instead of pausing to examine her own thinking, Elena pushed ahead with the original timeline, convinced that extra pressure would solve everything. When the launch finally happened, the product received poor reviews and sales were far below target.

Elena shared her frustration with her mentor. The two spent an afternoon reviewing every decision. They discovered that Elena had never questioned her initial assumptions about customer needs, nor had she monitored team morale or adjusted strategies when early warning signs appeared. With very little time left before the next quarterly review, Elena decided to try a different approach. She asked her mentor to guide her through a structured metacognition exercise.

Her mentor offered to help on condition that Elena would apply the same reflective process with her entire team in the coming weeks. Elena agreed. Together they mapped out what had gone wrong and what she could have done differently. Elena realised that if she had practised metacognition from the beginning, she would have caught the problems much earlier and the launch would have been far more successful.

Shortly after the review, Elena called a team meeting. She openly admitted her earlier lack of self-reflection and asked everyone to share what they had been thinking at each stage of the project. By giving the team permission to examine their own thinking processes, the group quickly identified several hidden biases and created a much stronger recovery plan. Within three months, the revised product was back on track and sales began to recover.

Glossary:

- **assumptions:** beliefs or ideas that are accepted as true without proof
- **warning signs:** early indications that something is going wrong
- **structured exercise:** a deliberate, step-by-step process
- **self-reflection:** careful thought about one's own actions and thinking

1. How did Elena's failure to challenge her initial assumptions and monitor early warning signs directly contribute to the unsuccessful product launch?
2. In high-pressure business environments, what practical systems can leaders implement to ensure continuous self-reflection and prevent strategic blind spots during critical projects?



8 Optional extension

Discuss these questions in pairs or small groups.

- 1.The video and the story both deal with three core professional concepts in metacognition: unconscious biases, real-time monitoring of your own thinking, and post-action evaluation. Comment on the relevance of these concepts to your own work and decision-making.
- 2.There is a strong “reflective cycle” flavour to this topic. What do you think is the significance of applying metacognition during high-pressure situations such as board meetings, crisis management, or tight project deadlines?
- 3.What are some possible reasons why some executives and high-performing professionals resist using metacognition even though the benefits are clear?
- 4.Why have ideas about “thinking about your thinking” become so popular in professional development programmes today? What do they mean to us as leaders and team members in the modern workplace?





8

Six Thinking Hats

A practical metacognition tool

Edward de Bono's Six Thinking Hats is one of the most widely used metacognitive frameworks in business and leadership worldwide. It helps professionals deliberately switch between different modes of thinking instead of jumping between them unconsciously. By "putting on" a different coloured hat, you force your brain to focus on one type of thinking at a time. This dramatically improves decision-making, reduces conflict in meetings, and develops the metacognitive skill of consciously choosing how you think.

Six Thinking Hats – Reference Table

A quick-reference guide to Edward de Bono's Six Thinking Hats framework, mapping each hat's colour, focus, key question, and professional use.

Hat Colour	Focus	Key Question	Professional Use Example
Blue 	Process & control	"What is the best way to think about this?"	Setting the agenda and summarising outcomes
White 	Facts & information	"What do we know?"	Data, statistics, evidence
Red 	Emotions & intuition	"How do I feel about this?"	Gut feelings, fears, excitement
Black 	Risks & caution	"What could go wrong?"	Critical analysis, problems, weaknesses
Yellow 	Benefits & optimism	"What are the advantages?"	Value, opportunities, positive outcomes
Green 	Creativity & new ideas	"What new possibilities exist?"	Innovation, alternatives, "what if?"

How to practise the technique

1. Choose a real professional issue (a difficult decision, team conflict, strategy problem, etc.).
2. The **Blue Hat** always starts and ends the session (sets the rules and summarises).
3. Go around the hats in any logical order (most common: Blue → White → Red → Black → Yellow → Green → Blue).
4. Everyone wears the **same hat at the same time** – this prevents people talking at cross purposes.
5. Time each hat (2–5 minutes is usually enough).

**8**

Six Thinking Hats

Comprehensive classroom exercise (30–40 minutes)

Task: Apply the Six Thinking Hats to a current professional challenge

Work in groups of 4–6. Each group chooses **one real work-related issue** (e.g. “Should we launch the new product in Q3 despite supply-chain risks?” or “How should we handle a difficult client who is always late with payments?”).

How to practise the technique

1. **Blue Hat (3 min)** – Appoint a facilitator. Decide the exact question and rules for the session.
2. **White Hat (4 min)** – List only facts, data and known information. No opinions.
3. **Red Hat (3 min)** – Everyone shares emotions and gut feelings (no need to justify).
4. **Black Hat (5 min)** – Identify all risks, weaknesses and potential problems.
5. **Yellow Hat (4 min)** – List all benefits, opportunities and positive outcomes.
6. **Green Hat (6 min)** – Brainstorm creative solutions and new ideas (no criticism allowed).
7. **Blue Hat (4 min)** – Summarise key insights, decide next actions and reflect:
 - What new perspectives did we gain?
 - Which hat was most useful? Why?
 - How could using this method have changed a past decision in your company?

Individual reflection (5 min)

Write one paragraph: “If I had used the Six Thinking Hats on my last major decision, what would have been different?”

Practical “Implement it now” homework (for immediate real-life application)

Choose one of the following tasks to complete before our next lesson and bring your notes:

1. **Meeting upgrade:** Use the Six Hats in your next team meeting (even for 10 minutes). Send a short email beforehand saying “Let’s try the Six Thinking Hats technique today to make our discussion more structured.”
2. **Solo decision:** Take a current work decision you need to make this week. Run through all six hats on paper or in a voice memo. Write a short “Before vs After” reflection.
3. **Daily micro-practice:** For the next 5 working days, choose one small decision each day (e.g. how to reply to an email, prioritise tasks) and quickly run through the six hats mentally. Note which hat gave you the biggest insight.
4. **Leadership challenge:** Introduce the Six Hats to your direct reports or colleagues in the next week and facilitate one short session. Record what changed in the quality of discussion.

Follow-up question for next class

How did using the Six Thinking Hats feel different from your normal way of thinking? What impact did it have on the final decision or outcome?



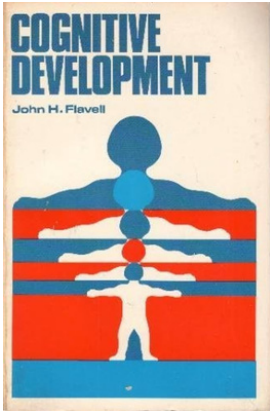
Transcripts

1. Understanding the introduction

Speaker: hi everyone Etienne is here and in this video we will explore what is metacognition and how it functions I'll be also sharing some examples of metacognition so it is easier to understand it and what role it plays in our life if this is your first time on this channel then make sure you subscribe and hit the bell like to get updates on my latest videos on time management and productivity metacognition is an awareness of one's own learning it is often referred to as thinking about thinking it means understanding the goal of the learning process figuring out the best strategies for learning and then assessing whether the desired outcome is being met metacognition is often term used with students as they are actively involved in a continuous learning process there are three main metacognition phases planning monitoring evaluation and then they're all held together with reflection let's say that you're writing your first book it wouldn't be smart move to simply get on with the first chapter instead you should plan out and drop the outline of the book then you need to monitor your progress as you go here you can track it by writing down what progress you are making for example how many words you're writing each week and you also need to evaluate your work you can do that by reviewing your week's work each weekend to be sure that you're happy with the quality of your work in the end you need to be able to reflect on these steps as this will give you ability to make adjustments to the process if needed metacognition has been linked to improved learning outcomes so if you spend more time planning you're more likely that you'll complete your task or achieve your goal quicker it makes sense that individuals core strategic in their learning are more successful than those who don't reflect on the learning process to increase your metacognition you can use questioning revising and assessing method to ensure that you're on the right track I hope that you enjoy this video and I was able to give you quick overview about what metacognition is and what functions it performs if you enjoy this video then make sure you hit that like button and if you you to this channel then type new in the comments below



Recommended Reading for Continued Growth



Cognitive Development by John H. Flavell



As you reach the end of this lesson on **Metacognition - Thinking about your Thinking** , I'd like to recommend one of the most insightful books I've read on understanding how we grow and learn: Cognitive Development by John H. Flavell. This book is a foundational guide for anyone interested in how human thinking evolves, how we acquire knowledge, and how our mental processes shape the way we interact with the world.

About the Book: Cognitive Development explores the stages and mechanisms of how children and adults develop their thinking abilities. Flavell, a pioneering scholar in developmental psychology, presents clear explanations of major theories, research findings, and practical implications. The book covers topics such as memory, problem-solving, language acquisition, and the social contexts that influence learning. Through accessible writing and thoughtful analysis, it helps readers grasp not only the science of cognition but also its relevance to education, communication, and everyday life.

Whether you're a student of psychology, a professional, or simply curious about how the mind grows and adapts, this book will deepen your understanding of human development and provide valuable insights into how learning and self-awareness unfold over time.



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